

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Cottonwood Creek Bridge

Other names/site number 24CR0643/MDT Identification No. L0992001003+07001

2. Location

street & number Milepost 3.7 on Moon Creek Road

☐ not for publication

city or town Thirteen miles southwest of Miles City

☒ vicinity

State Montana

code MT

county Custer

code 017

zip code n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide X local

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Cottonwood Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Custer, Montana
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal
<input type="checkbox"/>	private

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		Objects
		buildings
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Montana's Historic Timber Stringer Bridges

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) =
Bridge

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) =
Bridge

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Timber Stringer Bridge

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: WOOD: Timber

walls:

roof:

other: WOOD: Timber

Cottonwood Creek Bridge

Custer, Montana

Name of Property

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Cottonwood Creek Bridge consists of one contributing resource. The bridge is a one-span treated timber stringer structure constructed by Custer County forces in 1928 from standardized plans furnished by the Montana Highway Department. It is located on Moon Creek Road approximately 3.7 miles south of the Interstate 94 Moon Creek Interchange (#126). The bridge measures 26 feet long and 26 feet wide. The intact double rail guardrails are standard to timber stringer bridges designed by the Montana Highway Department between 1915 and 1960. The bridge is located in a rural setting and functions as a stream crossing on a farm-to-market road.

Narrative Description

The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is located in the lower Yellowstone River valley of southeastern Montana. The bridge crosses the creek on Moon Creek Road at Milepost 3.7 about 13 miles southwest of Miles City. The bridge is located in the breaks south of the Yellowstone River within the Fort Union Formation, which formed about 65 million years ago during Cretaceous times; the formation marks the vast coastal plains that once bordered an inland sea. The area is part of the northern Great Plains and is characterized by rolling hills, numerous dry drainages and small creeks, and grassy vegetation. The area around the bridge is currently used for cattle grazing.¹

The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is a one-span treated timber stringer structure measuring 26 feet in length and 26 feet wide with a roadway width of 24 feet. Timber abutments and wingwalls braced with wood pilings support the bridge ends. Twelve lines of 8 inch x 17 inch timber stringers support the timber deck which consists of 2 x 4s overlain with gravel. Wood curbs with drains and double-coursed wood guardrails mounted on wood posts bolted to the outside stringers flank the deck. Enameled sheet metal plates displaying raised black letters reading "Cottonwood Creek" are attached to the guardrail endposts on the north and south.

Integrity

The bridge retains excellent integrity. Built in 1928, it retains all of its original components, including the wood curbs, double-railed wood guardrails, and name plates. A portion of the guardrail on the northwest end is broken, but easily repairable. There have been no significant modifications made to this bridge since its construction. The bridge represents an excellent and intact example of the type of treated timber stringer bridges designed by the Montana Highway Department between 1915 and 1960.

¹ David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1986), 384.

Cottonwood Creek Bridge
Name of Property

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Transportation

Period of Significance

1928-1963

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Montana Highway Department/Designer

Custer County/Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance for this property begins with the construction of the bridge was constructed in 1928 through its continued use as an important component of a farm-to-market road.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Cottonwood Creek Bridge
Name of Property

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The bridge is eligible under Criterion A as representative of the type of structure used by the state and counties between 1915 and 1960 to provide access to railroad stations and primary state-maintained highways from county farm-to-market roads. Timber stringer bridges were typically used to span relatively narrow obstacles such as streams and ravines. The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is emblematic of the standard timber stringer bridge in design and use between 1915 and 1960. The structure was built during the peak years of timber stringer bridge construction from 1926-1941 when at least 1,242 such bridges were constructed in Montana. The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is one of only a very few intact examples of this style remaining on Montana's primary, secondary, and county roads.

The bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C as an excellent and intact example of this once abundant bridge type. All of the original timber components, including stringers, decking, abutments, and, importantly, guardrails, are intact and unchanged. It retains considerable integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Montana Highway Department's bridge department and with an on-going program by Custer County to provide good roads and bridges for its constituency. Custer County built the bridge from a timber bridge design standardized by the Montana Highway Department in 1915. The bridge follows the plan exactly and is one of only a few timber stringer bridges remaining in Montana that have not been significantly altered. The highway department oversaw the construction of 64 timber stringer bridges on the state's primary highways in 1928. The department moreover furnished a standardized design for timber stringer bridges to Montana's counties. Consequently, large numbers of this type of bridge were built on county-maintained farm-to-market roads between 1915 and 1960 when steel stringer and prestressed concrete bridges supplanted them. The Cottonwood Creek Bridge typifies that highway department design and its function on a farm-to-market road represents a typical use for the type during that period.

The bridge has not been modified by Custer County and retains all of its original components, including the structurally defining double-rail guardrails. The highway department only designed timber stringer bridges with this type of guardrail denoting bridges from 1915 until 1960. During the 1980s, the Montana Department of Transportation removed the top rails on most of the timber bridges in the state to better accommodate wider loads. Consequently, this bridge is a rarity in the state and one of only a few that still retain the double railed guardrails. All of the original structural components of the bridge remain intact without modification. No additional stringers have been added to strengthen the deck, nor has it been widened, and it retains its original decking. The setting of the site also remains intact and the bridge continues to function in its original capacity on an important farm-to-market road in Custer County. The excellent integrity of the bridge strongly contributes to the listing of the structure under Criterion C.

Engineering Significance

The Cottonwood Creek Bridge is significant as an intact example of a standard MDT-designed timber stringer bridge. All of the structure's original components are intact and unmodified. The structurally defining double-coursed guardrails and wood curbs are also still present on the bridge, which makes it one of only a few timber bridges remaining in the state that has not been significantly altered.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The Custer County Road Department built the Cottonwood Creek Bridge in 1928. Because of the low cost of the bridge, little documentation exists in the county records. The bridge's design was developed by the Montana Highway Commission's bridge department in 1915, with plans provided to the counties. Because the bridge measures less than 40 feet in length, it fell outside the purview of the Montana Highway Department.²

² Bridge Inspection Record No. L09201003+07001, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena; George R. Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission for the Years 1915-1916*, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1916), 5, 8.

Cottonwood Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Custer, Montana
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Alt, David and Donald W. Hyndman. *Roadside Geology of Montana*. (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991).

Axline, Jon. *Monuments Above the Water: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*. (Helena: Montana Department of Transportation, 1993).

____. *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*. (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2005).

Bridge Inspection File No. L09201003+07001. Bridge Bureau. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

County Commissioner Proceedings. Clerk and Records Office. Custer County Courthouse. Miles City, Montana.

Fanning the Embers. (Miles City: Range Rider Reps, 1971).

Jones, Helen Carey, comp. *Custer County Area History: As We Recall*. (Dallas, Texas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1989).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☒ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: Montana Department of Transportation

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.5
(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

NAD27

1 13 420241 5122867
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary for the Cottonwood Creek Bridge measures 26 x 25 feet. The boundary encompasses the structure and its approaches on both sides of the creek for a distance of 120 feet off each end of the bridge. The boundary is centered on the bridge.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Boundaries for the Cottonwood Creek Bridge are drawn to encompass the single span of the bridge, its immediate approaches and that portion of the creek spanned by the bridge. The width is increased beyond the measurements of the structure to include the abutments.

Cottonwood Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Custer, Montana
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jon Axline/Historian

organization Montana Department of Transportation

date November 24, 2010

street & number 2701 Prospect Avenue

telephone (406) 444-6258

city or town Helena

state MT

zip code 59620-1001

e-mail jaxline@mt.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

(See Continuation Sheets)

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Custer County

street & number 1010 Main Street

telephone 406-847-3351

city or town Miles City

state MT

zip code 59301-3419

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cottonwood Creek Bridge

Name of Property

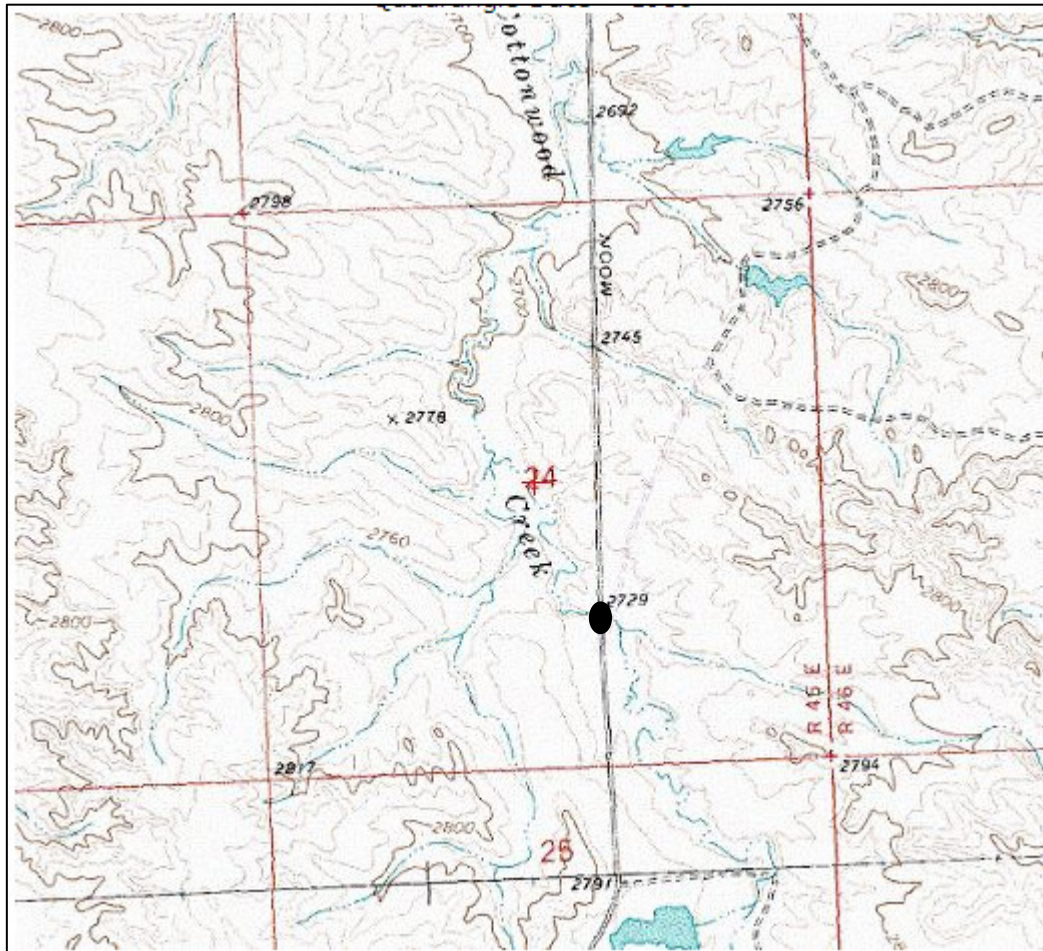
Custer, MT

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Montana's Historic Timber Stringer Bridges

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Location of Cottonwood Creek Bridge. Found on the Horton, Montana 7.5' USGS Quadrangle Map 1968 (Photorevised 1980)

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Section number Photographs Page 9

Name: Cottonwood Creek Bridge (24CR0643)
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kristi Hager
Date of Photograph: 2005
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.
Description and view of camera: West side. View to east.
Photograph: 0001

Name: Cottonwood Creek Bridge (24CR0643)
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: March 2005
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.
Description and view of camera: East Side. View to the southwest.
Photograph: 0002

Name: Cottonwood Creek Bridge (24CR0643)
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kristi Hager
Date of Photograph: 2005
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.
Description and view of camera: North portal. View to south.
Photograph: 0003

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Photo 0001. Cottonwood Creek Bridge. West elevation. View to the east.

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Photo 0002. Cottonwood Creek Bridge. East elevation. View to the southwest.

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Photo

Cottonwood Creek Bridge. North portal. View to the south.

0003.